



“WRAIR Forward”

December 2005, NO. 30

This activities report is published by the U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command

COMMANDER'S CORNER

As a researcher, I'm used to seeing products take years to complete. For instance, one series of articles on which I was involved took over five years from inception to final publication. Thus, I've been amazed that in less than a year the staff at USAMRU-E executed the necessary research to develop a validated one-page psychological screen, and produced a product that has subsequently been used with an entire Army Division here in Europe. As a researcher, I also find it extremely rewarding that a product we developed is credited with having saved several lives by identifying at-risk Soldiers. This is Army Medical Research at its best, and I feel very proud to be the commander of such an outstanding team of individuals.

-LTC Paul D. Bliese

Division-Wide Screening Begins

Post-deployment psychological screening took a big step forward this quarter as division-wide psychological screening was implemented with the 1st Armored Division (1AD). The 90-120 day post-deployment screening program used the recently developed USAMRU-E short form. USAMRU-E spent the last year conducting blind validation studies and analyzing findings to produce a validated psychological screening tool and a set of screening procedures that could be easily implemented.

The new short form is designed to be fast, efficient, easy to administer, and to minimize the number of false positives. The form assesses five major clinical areas (depression, post-traumatic stress, alcohol problems, relationship problems, and anger problems) using a small number of items per dimension. Cut-off values are based on results from two blind validation studies. The first was conducted by USAMRU-E with a deploying battalion of Soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division. The second study was a post-deployment screen involving Soldiers in the Southern European Task Force (SETAF) in February and March of 2004. Based on these two validation studies, the entire screening form was shortened to one page (front and back) and screening procedures were altered to streamline the process.

The implementation of the screening program was a combined team effort involving USAMRU-E, the 1AD, and the Europe Regional Medical Command (ERMC). USAMRU-E provided the screening short form, procedural recommendations, training and some direct screening support. The bulk of the screening fell to the 1AD Division Surgeon, 1AD Brigade Surgeons, and 1AD Division Mental Health staff. Finally, ERMC played an important role in coordinating screening support using ERMC, Landstuhl and Heidelberg medical assets.

The USAMRU-E team providing support for 1AD screened 934 Soldiers during 30 NOV 04-13 DEC 04. The team members included LTC Bliese (Commander, USAMRU-E), Dr. Wright (principal investigator for screening, USAMRU-E), CPT Cabrera (Chief, Research Operations, USAMRU-E),

SGT Carr (NCOIC, USAMRU-E), SPC Sinclair (USAMRU-E), Mr. Rahey (administrative officer, USAMRU-E) and CACI contractors Ms. Prayner, Ms. Rice, and Ms. Salvi. LTC Mosley, Director, Soldier and Family Support Services (SFSS), Europe Regional Medical Command (ERMC), LTC Dubois, Chief, Social Work Services, Heidelberg Medical Activity, and CPT Steggle, Deputy Chief for ERMC's Exceptional Family Member Program and Educational and Developmental Intervention Services, provided additional clinical support.

The 1AD screening program entailed several planning meetings with ERMC, including a meeting with BG Hawley-Bowland, ERMC Commander, (21 DEC 04), and a training presentation (conducted by LTC Bliese) at the November meeting of 1AD medical personnel in Wiesbaden (3 NOV 04) at the request of LTC Dominguez, Division Surgeon, 1AD. Other presentations include the ERMC Case Manager meeting (LTC Bliese & Dr. Wright; 15 DEC 04) and the Army Science Conference:

Wright, K.M., Bliese, P.D., Thomas, J.L., Adler, A.B., & Hoge, C. (2004, November). Validating Post-Deployment Mental Health Screening Instruments: How Good Are They?

Plans are now underway to conduct a follow-up validation study with the new short form plus an additional set of questions regarding sleep problems. This study is planned for the spring of 2005. (WRAIR Protocol #889).

What is the impact of a 15 month combat deployment on Soldiers?

This question is at the core of USAMRU-E's implementation of the Land Combat Study with the 1st Armored Division this fall. In order to learn more about the rate of psychiatric distress, barriers to care and perceptions of stigma, the Division of Neurosciences, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), is conducting a large-scale survey study (COL Hoge and LTC Castro, co-principal investigators) with units returning from combat. This quarter, the survey was also administered to 1AD units. The 1AD has been deployed 25% longer than any unit already surveyed as part of the Land Combat Study. The impact of this longer deployment is one of the questions this survey addresses; the other question addresses barriers to behavioral health care that are specific to living in Europe. Results will be used to provide Army leaders with the latest information about the health of their forces and continue the work of tracking psychiatric distress rates over time following re-deployment from combat. (Protocol #1026).



CPT Cabrera (left) briefs 1st Armored Division Soldiers on the Land Combat Study survey.

Evacuations from Operation Iraqi Freedom: Tracking Mental Health

As part of an effort to support the Mental Health Advisory Team (MHAT) which for the second year in a row is assessing mental health evacuations, services and procedures among military personnel deployed to Iraq, USAMRU-E conducted a record review data collection at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. In October (13-15, 18 and 21 OCT 04), a team from USAMRU-E reviewed 301 medical records of soldiers evacuated from Iraq for mental health reasons and tracked diagnosis, disposition, and demographics. The data was then provided to the MHAT team's record review POC, COL Edward Crandall, and director COL Virgil Patterson. The USAMRU-E team consisted of LTC Bliese, CPT Cabrera, SGT Carr, SPC Sinclair, Ms. Bellis, Ms. Prayner, and Ms. Rice.

Promotion Ceremony

The Commander of USAMRU-E was promoted to the rank of LTC effective 1 NOV 04. The promotion was conducted by COL Jones, Deputy Commander, Europe Regional Medical Command.



Command Sergeants Major and USAMRU-E

- CSM Eddy, Command Sergeant Major, US Army Medical Department, visited the unit on 8 DEC 04 and received a briefing about the unit's work (LTC Bliese and SPC Sinclair). SGT Carr, NCOIC, USAMRU-E, and SPC Sinclair were presented with coins by CSM Eddy (10 DEC 04).
- USAMRU-E was featured in this quarter's *US Army Medical Department Journal* in an article written by CSM Costa, Command Sergeant Major, MRMC.

Presentation

Norris, R.L., Maguen, S., Litz, B.T., Britt, T.W., Adler, A.B., Bartone, P.T. (2004, November). Physical health symptoms in peacekeepers: Has the role of deployment stress been overstated? Poster presented at the 38th Annual meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy, New Orleans, LA.



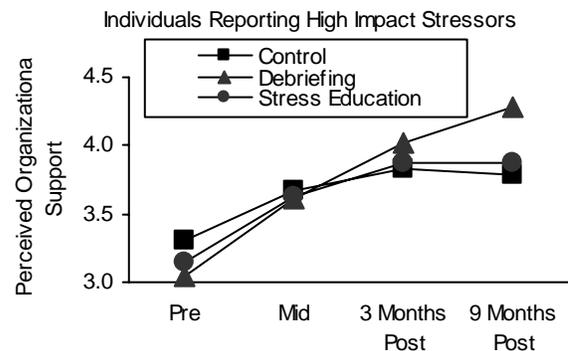
NATO Research Group 020

The Slovakian military hosted the fall meeting of the NATO Research Group “Stress and Psychological Support in Modern Military Operations” in Bratislava (4-8 OCT 04). Representatives from 22 NATO and Partnership for Peace (PfP) countries met to discuss cooperative projects and future plans. (LTC Bliese and Dr. Adler)

Results from Debriefing Research

Background: Critical-incident stress debriefing (CISD) is a widely-applied intervention to prevent mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder that may result from exposure to potentially traumatic events in the military (and elsewhere). Until recently, there had been no controlled trials of CISD applied to groups of Soldiers. In 2002 and 2003, USAMRU-E (with support from scientists at the Division of Neurosciences, WRAIR, and the Boston Veteran's Affairs Health Care System) conducted a randomly controlled trial of CISD with Soldiers deployed on a six-month peacekeeping mission. We compared CISD with a stress management education class and no intervention.

Results: Multi-level causal modeling analyses revealed that CISD did not result in better health outcomes relative to the other two conditions. Consistent with prior research, however, Soldiers reported that they liked CISD more than the stress education class. Furthermore, contrary to some of the CISD studies with individual victims of trauma, we found that CISD did **not** make soldiers worse or cause greater distress. Finally, there was a trend in the data suggesting that Soldiers in the CISD condition reported greater organizational support over time than did those in the other conditions (see figure below).



This quarter, the final results of the debriefing study were provided to the 1st Infantry Division leadership (LTC Brumage, Division Surgeon, 11D) and presented at a scientific conference:

Adler, A.B., Suvak, M.K., Litz, B.T., Castro, C.A., Wright, K.A., Thomas, J.L., & Williams, L. (2004, November). A controlled trial of group debriefing in the military: Preliminary findings. Poster presented at the 38th Annual Meeting of the Association for Advancement of Behavior Therapy, New Orleans, LA.

Future Directions: Because Soldiers in the study did not experience extensive traumatic stress, the generalizability of the findings is limited. Our goal is to replicate the study on soldiers returning from combat in Iraq. (Protocol #862).

Staff Assistance Visit

MRMC staff assistance visit (SAV), conducted on 17 NOV 04, included LTC Kelley, Officer in Charge; LTC Miranda, IG; Mr. Laureano, Property Management; Ms. Anderson, Government Purchase Card; Ms. Souris, Environmental; and Ms Hyde, Safety.

Personnel Updates

- CPT Thomas departed from USAMRU-E after 4 years as Chief of Research Operations. He is now serving at the Division of Neurosciences at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (5 OCT 04).
- Mr. Rahey, GS-11, began working as the unit's budget analyst and administrative officer (29 NOV 04).
- The unit received new carpeting in a renovation program sponsored by the US Army Hospital in Heidelberg (NOV 04).

This is an unofficial Army publication, authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1, and published quarterly in the interest of the **U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe**, CMR 442, APO AE 09042 (DSN: 371-2626). This issue was approved by HQ, WRAIR for release. Editorial views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Visit our homepage: <http://www.usamru-e.hqusareur.army.mil/> to view our most recent briefs and reports. For information on our research initiatives, contact: paul.bliese@us.army.mil.
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